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MOONROOF

the main attraction was under the stars

She was lips, arms, hands, long legs and sable hair, all at once and all in motion. But lips most of all. Her lips tasted of hunger, salt and sawdust. Some men said her kiss could kill. Ben wasn't sure about that, but he knew she tasted good. Grappling with her in his car that night, with the moonroof open wide, he remembered. . . .

He met her at the circus. Delicious Tess, they called her. She worked on the midway, guessing weights. If she guessed within five pounds of your weight, she won and you forfeited your dollar. If she missed, you got a kiss. So she always won, since she kept your dollar either way, but no man ever complained. She was a nuclear kisser. Old Red, the clown who said he had been with the circus for "near a hundred years," claimed he'd seen her kiss kill a few men. Tess kissed them, their knees buckled and they fell over dead. "And they was happy to be dead," Old Red said, "that's how good she kissed."

Her booth was one of the grandest on the midway. THE KILLER KISS, it read, in ruby letters surrounded by lights. "Danger—that's the draw. That's what makes her the biggest star we got," the clown told Ben one night. "Them newspaper clippings you see on her booth? Stories all 'bout the men she killed, from Bangor to Spokane."

"She really killed people?" Ben asked.

"Maybe so, maybe no. You can get fake newspapers made." Old Red spat on Ben's shoe. "Me, I never tried her. Never would. You got your young romantics in the world like you, boy, but Old Red don't figure there's any woman's kiss worth dyin' for."

Ben was new to the circus. A high school quarterback with an attitude, he attended one college practice, where the coach told him he might be a football hero back home but here at State U he was just another snot-nose kid, and he'd better start keeping curfew or he'd be a bench warmer with no scholarship. Ben threw a touchdown pass, walked to the sideline, handed the coach his helmet and said, "Goodbye and good luck. I'm joining the circus."

Now he spent his nights pushing a shovel behind the lions and elephants. Old Red called him "Bedpan Ben." Ben pushed his scooper and saved his pay. After six months he put a down payment on a car, a souped-up little buggy with a moonroof. As he drove from town to town ahead of the circus caravan, he imagined Tess in his car with him, Tess applying her killer kiss as they sped from Wyoming to Idaho.

The circus moved from week to week—Casper, Pocatello, Twin Falls, Boise. One night it was midnight in Boise. The only people on the midway were Ben, Old Red and a handful of dog-tired sideshow folk. Delicious Tess leaned on her booth, smoking a cigarette. She had not killed anyone that night. In fact, she hadn't had a dozen customers all weekend. The circus was dying; they would all have found other jobs by now had they not been circus folk, the kind for whom the term "dayjob" means slow death.

Old Red elbowed Ben in the ribs. "Go on," the clown said, "now's your chance."

"Maybe tomorrow."

"You got the best car in the lot, and that's a woman who deserves a fine chariot."

"Tomorrow," Ben said.

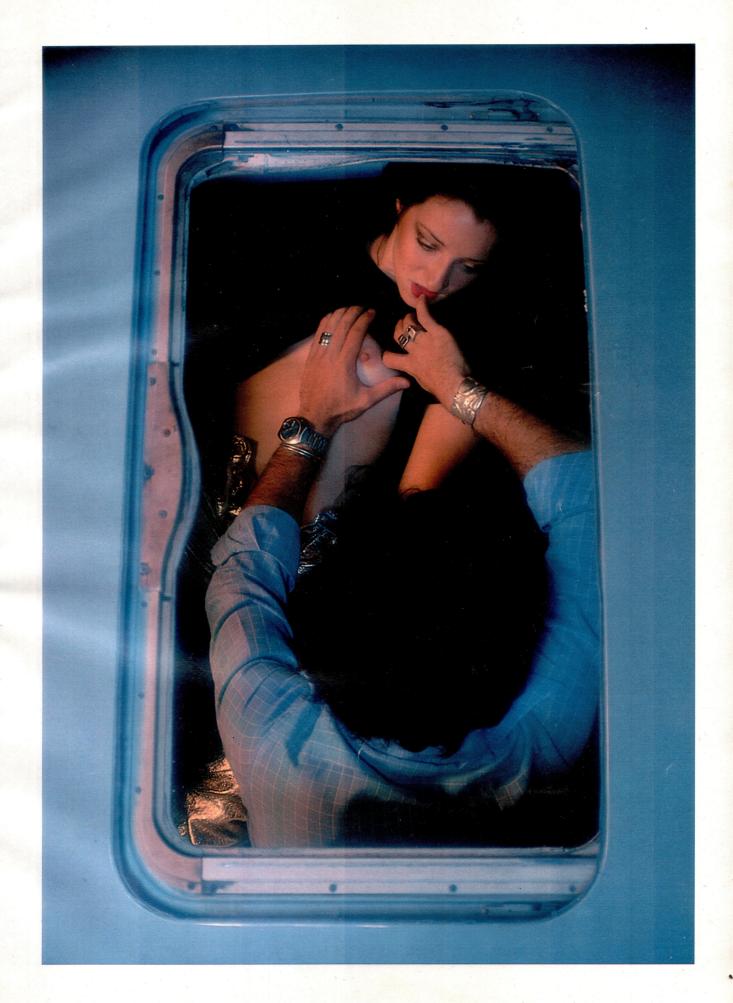
"She don't bite. Tasty Tess, she might kill a man with them lips, but she's got to kiss him to do it." Old Red laughed. "I got a dollar says you can't get a kiss from her."

"I could stand in line and pay her. I could get a kiss that way."

"I mean extracurricular. A real kiss," the clown said. "My dollar says you can't get that."

"You're on," Ben said.

To the tune of Old Red's cackle, Ben approached Tess. She dropped her cigarette, crushed it in the



sawdust under her heel, leaned back on her booth and crossed her arms. She wore silk slacks, spiked bracelets and a black T-shirt embossed with her initials, D.T.

"Slow night," Ben said.

"Yes." She studied him the way an entomologist views a bug.

"I'm Ben," he said. "I joined up back in Grand Rapids."

"I know," Tess Said.

"Got me a new car."

"I know."

"With a moonroof," he said. "Did you eat? There's a restaurant up north. I could drive you."

"How much do you weigh?" Tess asked.

"What?"

"One sixty?"

"One sixty-five," he said.

"Close enough."

Ben shuffled his feet. "I guess I don't win."

"You win. Let's go," she said, kissing his cheek. She took Ben's arm and led him to the parking lot. As they passed, Old Red flipped Ben a silver dollar. "What was that about?" Tess said.

"A bet," Ben said. "You kissed me and I'm still alive."

"For now."

The road was a silver arrow between fields of gray. The moon was full. Ben drove with his left hand. His right arm held Tess, her head against his shoulder, whistling. She whistled the tune that the midway carousel played, a melody circus people hear in their sleep.

"Aren't you sick of that tune?"
"I like it," she said.

"Over and over all day and night, the same dumb tune."

"It's sad."

"How long have you been with the circus?"

"Forever," she said.

The car reached the crest of a hill. The moon filled Ben's windshield. Tess sat up straight and said, "Pull over."

"Where?"

"Here."

He scanned the gray on both sides of the road. "What's here?"

"We are," she said.

He pulled over. Tess opened the roof. She took Ben's keys from the ignition and tossed them out of the car.

"What-"

"Hush." She put her finger to his lips. "Kiss me."













six women who found equal opportunities in pre-feminist history

rainy afternoon spent snuggled in a tufted chair with a book can lead to delicious flights of fancy. Our heroine, perhaps feeling in need of some wardrobe inspiration, amuses herself with an illustrated history of costume. As the crackling fire in the hearth lures her into slumber, her thoughts turn from costumes to speculation about some of the women in those amazing clothes women who forsook tradition in favor of life on their own terms. Although not all of them met with happy endings, each of their lives gives a present-day woman something to dream about. As Helen of Troy, she commands adulation as the most beautiful woman in the world. As Cleopatra, she basks in a luxurious bath attended by dozens of servants. Her life as Guinevere is spent slipping into secret castle rooms to meet her beloved Lancelot. She dreams of herself as Pocahontas, appearing to English settlers as the symbol of the innocence and loveliness of a new land. She is lovely but not-soinnocent as the haughty Marie-Antoinette. She transforms, chameleonlike, into dancer-turned-spy Mata Hari for a last tango through dreamland before waking to make her own lasting impression on the world.





According to legend, hers was the face that launched a thousand Greek warships. The most beautiful woman in the world, Helen was wooed by every man of power and wealth in the Greek Empire. From all corners of the kingdom they came in hopes of drawing her into their arms—and luring her to their beds. Her suitors vowed to unite against anyone interfering with the marriage. Finally, Helen made her choice: Menelaus, who would become king of Sparta. Proud and pleased in his victory, he jubilantly married her, and they spent long nights in royal revelry. But their joy was short-lived. The goddess Aphrodite had made a deal with Paris, the young prince of Troy: In return for naming her as fairest of the goddesses, he would have Helen as his reward. He proceeded to Sparta, swooped Helen into his arms and carried her off to Troy. An enraged Menelaus reunited Helen's suitors and, commanded by his noble brother Agamemnon, they set out for Troy to bring Helen back. Ten years later, Troy fell, helped in no small part by a Greek gift to the Trojans, a soldier-filled wooden horse. Eventually, Paris was killed, Helen was reunited with her Menelaus and they sailed off in love and peace.

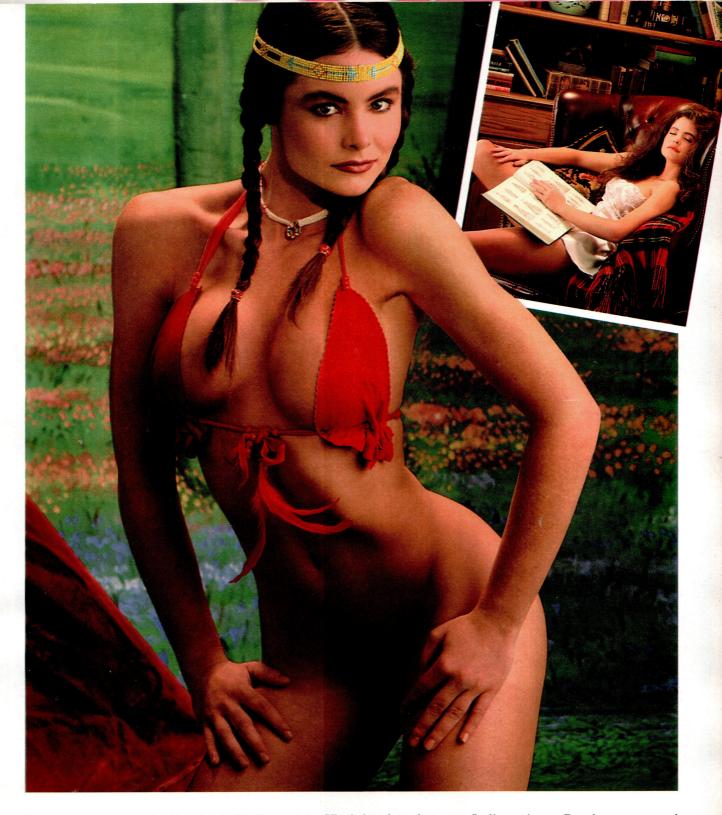




Cleopatra, queen of Egypt, famed for her beauty and ambition, turned seduction into high art. The two greatest Romans of her day, Julius Caesar and Mark Antony, became her willing subjects. Egypt being a sovereignty under Roman jurisdiction rather than an independent nation, Cleo knew it was important to curry favor with the powerful. Caesar was her first conquest. When he traveled to Egypt, Cleopatra set out to captivate him. So smitten was he that he spent a fortnight with her in amor. After Caesar was assassinated, Cleopatra's campaign for power barely faltered; she loaded a shimmering golden barge with gifts, sailed up the Cydnus River and captured Mark Antony's heart. The Roman ruler was so under her spell that he lost the respect of his subjects and was forcefully stripped of his powers by Octavian. Political power being more important to Cleo than an eleven-year love affair, she tricked Mark Antony into believing she was dead. Grief-stricken, he fell upon his sword and died. Cleopatra, failing to beguile Octavian, ordered that an asp be brought to her in a basket of figs. She was found dead lying upon a bed of gold, set out in all her royal ornaments, and was buried with Mark Antony.



Queen Guinevere was mired in the most famous ménage à trois in legend. Competing for her ardor were two powerful men: her husband, King Arthur, and his greatest knight, the handsome and valiant Sir Lancelot. The castle was gripped with tension with each unconsummated encounter between the quivering queen and the gallant knight. But her licentious love for Lancelot proved too much for her, and Queen Guinevere abdicated abstinence for Eros. His feelings for her came at a high price: Sent away by Arthur on a quest for the Holy Grail, the shining knight found his adulterous love for Guinevere condemned him and knew that he would never be able to look directly at the Grail. Upon returning from his failed quest, Lancelot resolved to avoid Guinevere for the sake of her honor. The angry queen banished him from the court, only to welcome him back to her arms as he rescued her from seemingly endless perils. For his part, poor cuckholded Arthur became so preoccupied with her royal highness's sexual indiscretions that he neglected his kingly duties. Dissension arose in Arthur's court, leading not only to his downfall, but to the end of the fellowship of the Knights of the Round Table.



The English colonists had just landed in Jamestown, Virginia, when the pretty Indian princess Pocahontas greeted them. Her naïve beauty, her simplicity and her love of life endeared her to the settlers. Friendly with the newcomers, she became an emissary between the colonists and her father, Chief Powhatan of the Algonquians. All was not well in the New World. When Indians ambushed colonial leader Captain John Smith, Pocahantas came to his rescue, throwing herself on top of him just as the ax was about to fall and imploring her father to spare his life. Relations between Indians and colonists grew worse after Smith returned to England. Pocahantas was kidnapped by the settlers as a pawn to negotiate peace. Treated courteously during her captivity, she learned to speak English and converted to Christianity. Powhatan ransomed Pocahontas, but she had met and fallen in love with John Rolfe. Their marriage encouraged peace between their peoples. Pocahontas and John Rolfe set sail for a visit in England, where she was ceremoniously received by the royal court. Tragically, shortly before she and John were to return to America, the beautiful Indian maiden contracted smallpox and died.



Spoiled and spirited Marie-Antoinette, daughter of Austria's Holy Roman Emperor Francis I, was only fifteen years old when she married French Dauphin Louis XVI. The palace of Versailles was to be her playground of pleasure. Excessive and extravagant, she firmly believed in the divine right of royalty to do absolutely whatever they wished, whenever they wished, regardless of the consequences to their subjects. And so, Marie-Antoinette gambled and danced. She performed in bawdy plays. She scandalized the French aristocracy with her sexual antics, outrageous behavior and low-cut dresses. Her lavish lifestyle and expensive wardrobe helped send France's national debt skyrocketing and hastened the beginning of the French Revolution. As hungry mobs stormed the palace begging for bread, Marie-Antoinette tossed her curls and sniffed, "Let them eat cake!" Public feeling mounted against her; the queen and king were forced from their home in Versailles and held hostage in Paris, where Louis XVI was overthrown and executed. Marie-Antoinette went from extravagance to disgrace, spending the last months of her life in filthy prison cells before meeting her end at the guillotine.

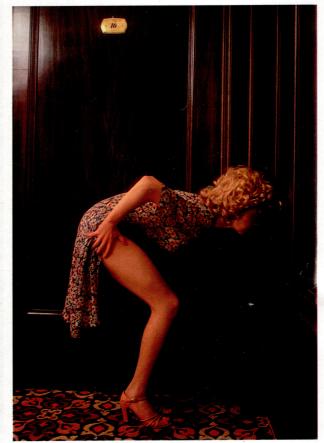


Mata Hari, born Margaretha Geertruida Zelle, began her career as a dancer. Her repertoire of lascivious dances, inspired by those from the temples of India, brought her notoriety on stages throughout Europe. Tall and curvaceous, with dark eyes and jet-black hair, Mata Hari easily persuaded admirers she hailed from exotic lands, although actually she was from a middle-class Dutch background. She preferred to give private performances for select gatherings. For her audiences, she favored diplomats and powerful men in the French and Dutch governments—and summarily seduced them. Mata Hari tired of this rather tawdry life and hit upon something much more exciting: the secret world of espionage. Not only was the life of a spy financially lucrative, but she could use her seductive powers to the fullest. Her World War I spying was conducted while cavorting in bed with high-ranking French, British and German government officials and flying officers, resulting in the death of nearly 100,000 Allied troops. Nationalities seem to have meant little to her—she worked for Germany, then blithely signed on to spy for France. When the French discovered her duplicity, she met her fate before a firing squad.

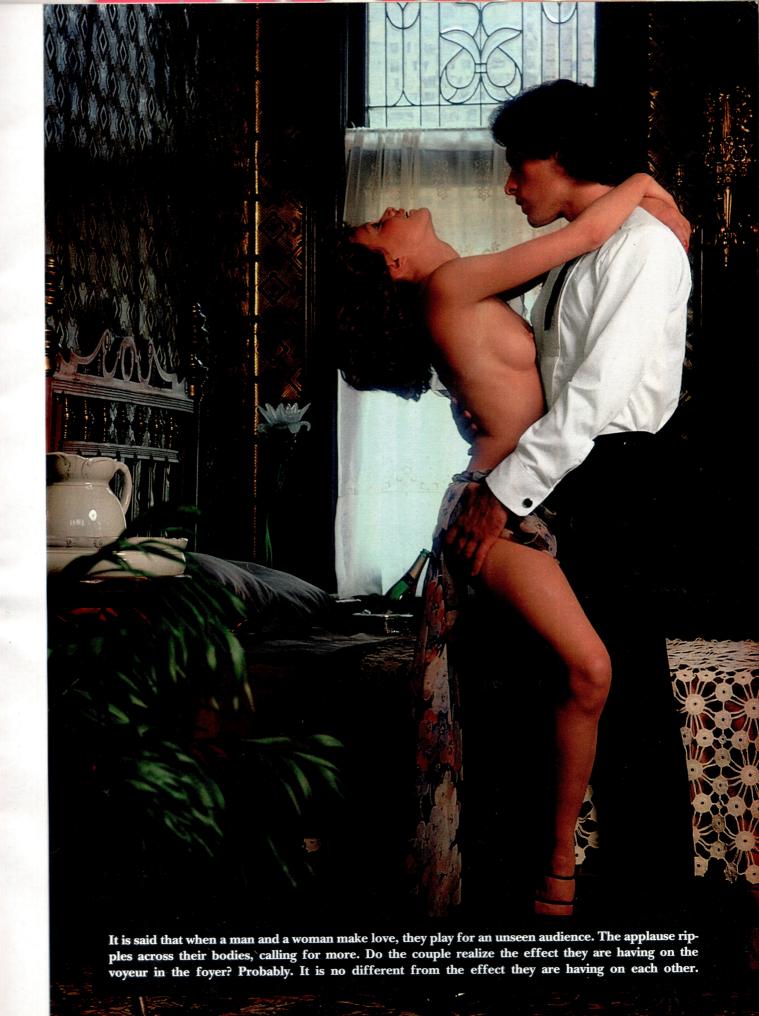
there are amazing sights to be seen from hotel corridors

PEEP

hen you're alone in a hotel room and things go bump in the night next door, it usually takes a few minutes to identify the sound. Sighs, moans and giggles soon make it clear that you're listening to two people making love to each other. The most curmudgeonly might respond with a complaint to the front desk. Embarrassment can be overcome by turning up the sound on the television, which might prompt a complaint by the person in the room above. A cold shower is the most recommended remedy for frustration. But let's suppose you're envious. What could happen if you wanted to join in the fun? You might have an adventure that would be written in your journal with purple ink.



SHOW













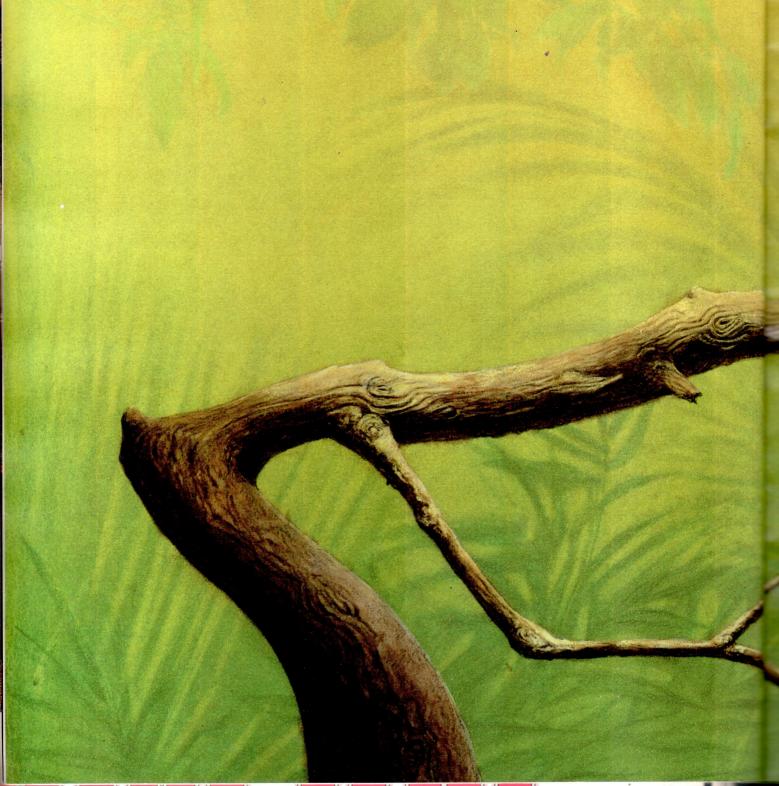




For months she slept, waiting. It was warm and dark in her cocoon. No light arrived to bother her eyes, no sound disturbed her. Her heartbeat was slower than the crawl of tides. She slept, waiting, and dreamed of an earlier life.

She dreamed she was a small, awkward, ugly thing. Born afraid, the thing she had been spent its days hiding from the light, crawling from light into darkness, afraid it would be eaten alive by a terrifying world. It had never slept, never dreamed of grace, beauty or happiness, never rested until the

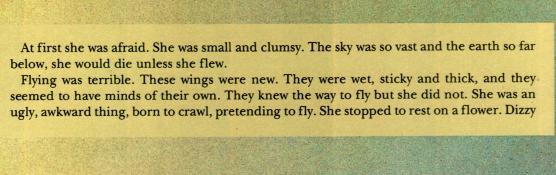
METAMORPHOSIS







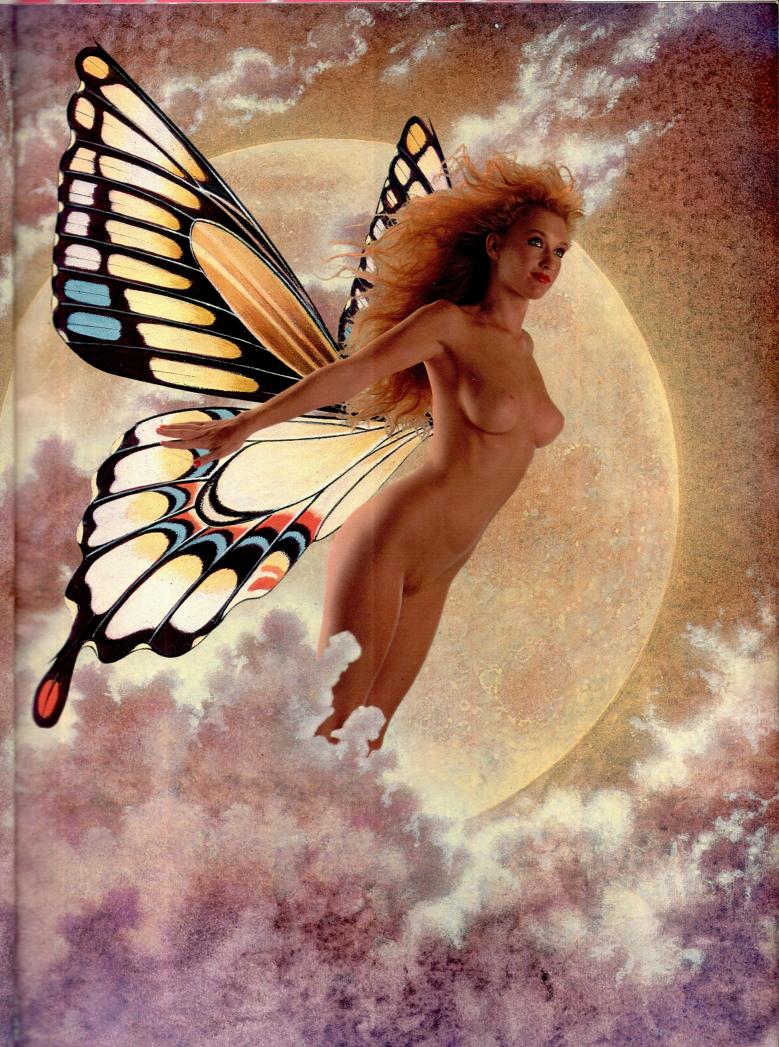












life after dark in

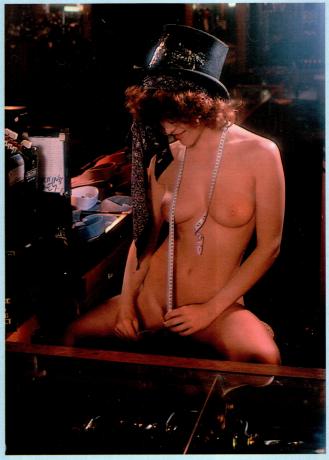
THE DEPARTMENT STORE

Ever wondered what it would be like for a mannequin suddenly to come alive? What would she notice first? Perhaps it would be the slow rise and fall of her breasts as she began to breathe, or a sense of clinging fabric about her thighs that would precipitate awareness. Would she glance down? Would she think it was an illusion, that if she tried to move, she couldn't?

Summoning her courage, she looks down at her very fresh body. She is pleased by what she sees and wonders who dressed her that morning. Judging by the clothes, he had good taste and, she remembers vaguely, soft, knowing hands. She blushes, then laughs at her ability to make herself change color so swiftly. Having just found her body, she is in no hurry to hide it, at least not yet. When the time comes, she will dress herself, thank you. After all, she is old enough, isn't she? Who knows? Perhaps she is as ancient as the ivory statue carved by the Greek sculptor Pygmalion and brought to life by the goddess Aphrodite. But our mannequin has no interest in history. Intuitively, she realizes that tonight is the only night of the rest of her life, that she must make the most of it. She sets out to explore.









There is so much to see, she hardly knows where to begin. A display of feather boas tickles her fancy. She removes all of her clothing to get the full impact of lighter-than-air fingers touching all parts of her body. She would love to spend the night in this room full of sensations, but her curiosity takes control and she continues.

She is amused by the haberdashery items. Nothing appeals to her, but she spends several minutes imagining a partner. He would be dressed in a soft cotton shirt, smooth flannel slacks and cashmere—sweater or jacket? No matter. She simply loves the feel of the stuff.

Women's clothes are more interesting. There is such a variety of styles and colors, it makes her head spin. Then she remembers the loving care that had gone into her display costume, the hands that had gently placed the clothes on her body. She doesn't want to disappoint him by appearing in something new.

In the cosmetics department, she goes a little wild. She tries every perfume tester until the air is heavy with the scent of hundreds of blossoms and the underlayment of musk. There seem to be zillions of lipstick shades, eye shadows, lotions and creams. But the novelty does not last long and she soon becomes bored.

She is revived somewhat when she discovers a mirror display. Of course she had seen her reflection in the store window, but never before has she seen herself in the nude. She stays a long time, examining herself from every angle, and eventually falls asleep. Her dreams are filled with refracted images, broken pieces of the whole of her body, and she smiles.













She awakens with a start, not knowing how long she has slept. When she sees it is still nighttime, she resumes her adventure, roaming through the vast space filled with so many exciting things she feels herself spinning, trying to see everything, miss nothing.

Coming suddenly upon an area filled with basins, tubs and shower stalls, she is delighted to find that she can fill one of the tubs to capacity. Her bath is delicious, each drop of water on her skin giving tactile pleasure. This activity is so wonderful she lingers much too long. There is only time enough for a cup of tea with a pint-sized friend before she has to hurry back to her place in the window.



TROUBLE in PARADISE

things were pretty boring before b.l. showed up

They were made for each other, and for a long time they had been happy in their garden. But the honeymoon was over.

"Adam?" Eve called.

He didn't answer. She picked a fig leaf off the ground, where he had dropped it.

"Adam!"

"Yo." Adam was dozing in his hammock. He'd had a long day making fire and naming animals.

"How many times have I asked you to hang your leaf on a branch?"

Adam groaned. Women, he thought. "How many times?" he asked. "We don't have numbers that big yet."

"You never hang up your leaf. You don't shave. You don't even think I'm pretty anymore."

Adam yawned. "Compared to what?"

Eve sighed. "You never remember my birthday, either. That shouldn't be so hard," she said. "It's the day after yours." Hanging up his leaf, she listed his failings and mourned the days when their love was new. Maybe she'd changed too, she said. Maybe sometimes she took him for granted, forgot to say how big and strong and sexy he was. But she tried, she said, and she was starting to wonder if he cared how hard she tried, or if he was even paying attention.

She was talking to herself. Adam was snoring.

One day Eve was washing their fig leaves in the pool. She looked up and there on the bank—skinny and chic and grinning like the cat who ate the canary—was someone new. He wore spats, a green fedora and a snakeskin suit. He had a black mustache thin as the brim of his hat.

"Looking good," he said.

"Me?" Eve asked.

"Yes, you, dear lady," said the sharpie. "A vision, that's what you are. I must tell you in all honesty that I have never seen a woman in your league. The beauty league is what I'm talking about." He held out his hand. "Tell me something. Do you model? Have I missed an issue of *Vogue*?"

Eve let this smooth talker help her climb out of the water. "What's *Vogue*?" she asked.

"Not important," said the gent. "What matters is getting you dried off and started on a new life." His free hand zipped into his jacket pocket and returned. "My card," he said. Eve took the card, which slowly turned gray as her wet hair dripped on it. The card

read B. L. Zebub, Entrepreneur.

Eve wanted to know what kind of name that was, Zebub.

"French," he said.

"What's an entrepreneur?" she asked.

The new guy in the garden laughed. "You're curious. That's good. Pretty and smart, a beauty with brains," he said. "Lucky me. An entrepreneur, pretty one, is a man who makes things happen. He puts one and one together and makes history. That's what I want to do with you. Make history. Do you have any idea how wide open the modeling business is right now for a beauty such as yourself? Do you know how far you could go with that face and that figure?"

Eve said, "Me?"

"With the proper representation, of course."

Eve was suspicious. She had never thought of herself as a world-class beauty. In fact, since Adam had started sleeping in the hammock, forgetting to put out the fire and come to their bed of palm leaves, she'd begun to feel plain, even ugly. Now this fellow from parts unknown was saying she was perfect. His offer was tempting.

"I'm not signing anything," she declared.

"This is my signature," he said, shaking her hand. "Don't worry about a thing, love. You're too good to stay here in the sticks. There's a whole world out there. Walk with me."

Waking from a deep sleep, Adam saw them arm in arm.

"Yo!" he shouted.

Eve jumped. B.L. squeezed her wrist. "Under control," he whispered, waving to Adam and calling, "How are you, sir? The lady has told me all about you. I know we're all going to get along."

"Who the hell," Adam asked, "are you?"

"A friend," said the dude on Eve's arm.

"This is my agent, honey," Eve said. "He thinks I'm beautiful."

Adam fell out of his hammock. He stood up, rubbing the sleep from his eyes, and saw Eve as clearly as the day they met. "You are beautiful," he said.

Eve nodded. "You say that now."

"I've said it before and I'll say it again," crowed B.L. "This woman is *dangerous*. That's how good she looks. And I'm going to make her a star."

"That's my woman," Adam said.





B.L. looked at Eve. "Tell him, dear," he said. "Or do you want me to tell him?"

Eve asked, "Tell him what?"

"That we're an item, you and me. This fellow is yesterday's news. You've got places to go, and he's just holding you back. From his looks, I wonder what you ever saw in him."

"Watch this," Adam said. He grabbed a sharpened stick, rubbed dirt on his cheeks, and shaved. When he finished he showed Eve his clean, sharp profile.

"You wonder if he's human," B.L. said. "I've seen better cheekbones on chimps."

Eve studied her man. "He is kind of a slob."

B.L. winked at Adam. "See?" he said.





Eve, leaving B.L. to run her hand over Adam's cheek, said, "But he's my slob."

"Don't blow this chance, sweets," B.L. said. "You only go around once. Don't fall for the first hairy chest you see."

"You talk too much, chump," Adam said.

"Says you. Why don't you let the lady talk?"

"Fine. Let's let the lady talk." Adam took Eve's right hand, B.L. grabbed her left hand, and they tugged.

"She's mine."

"Says you."

"Slob!"

"Snake!"

"WHOA!" Eve escaped. She danced away, stumbled,





then found her footing by snagging the branch of an apple tree. Adam and B.L., reaching for her, fell together. They wrestled. First Adam had the upper hand, then B.L., then Adam again and soon they were a dust ball at her feet.

"Stop it!" she said.

They stopped. Eve shook her head. Boys, she

thought. She stepped between them and said there was no point in fighting. She had made her choice.

"Tell me."

"No, tell me."

"I'll tell you both," she said.

Adam shoved B.L., who slapped the dust off his suit and stood up straight as an arrow. "Go on. Tell him,"



B.L. said.

Eve felt naked. Still, she felt strong. No cave man and no entrepreneur would make her choice for her, and her decision was final.

"Bachelor number one," she asked, "if you were the only guy in the world, and I was the only girl, what would you say to me?"

"I love you," Adam said.

Thunder sounded. Adam and Eve embraced. B.L. crept off into the tall grass east of Eden, cursing. "One down, millions to go," he hissed.

Eve took her man's hand and led him into the sunset. Adam grinned. "You look great tonight," he said. "What do you say we turn in early?"

you could get arrested for dancing on the sidewalk

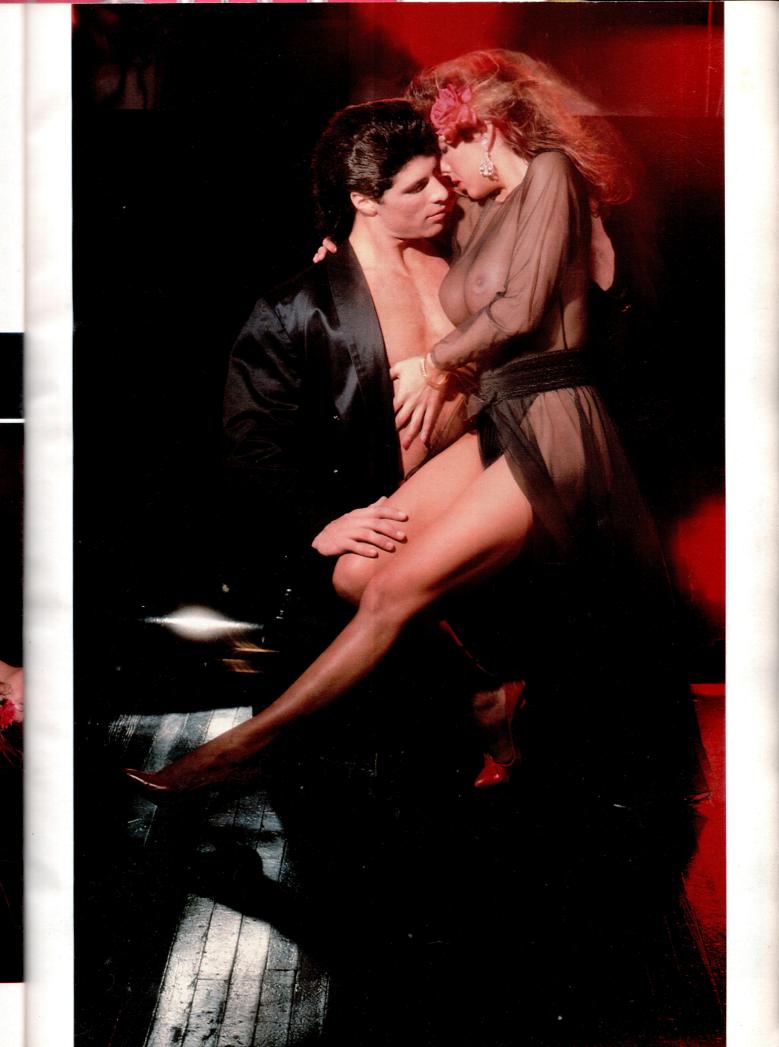
DOING IT ON THE DANCE FLOOR

rimitive cultures performed syncopated movements for any number of purposes, from promoting fertility to asking the gods for rain. Seduction has always been a major reason for dancing. The regal waltz and lively gavotte gave couples a chance to touch and flirt with each other in a way that was otherwise socially unacceptable. We've come a long way, baby. These days, action on the dance floor often looks like something that should be taking place in privacy. Who, watching the interplay between partners of sexy, rhythmic movements, has not felt the urge, the itch, to be in the place of one of those persons?

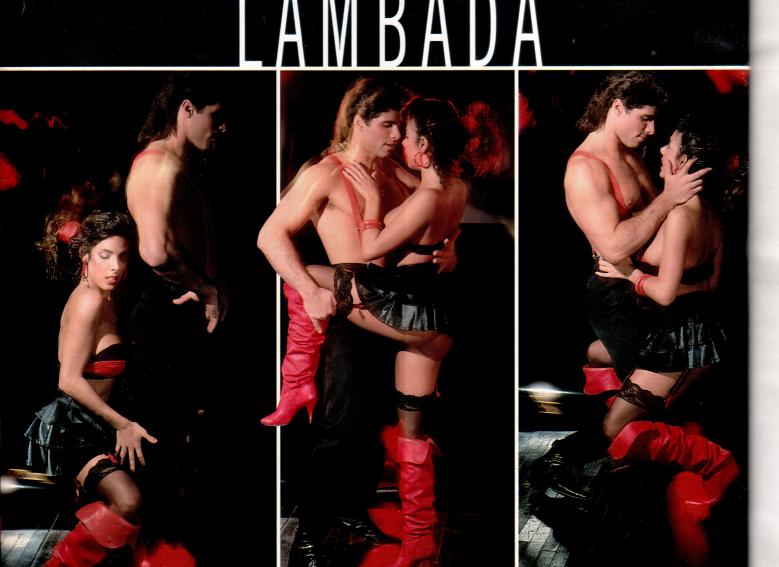


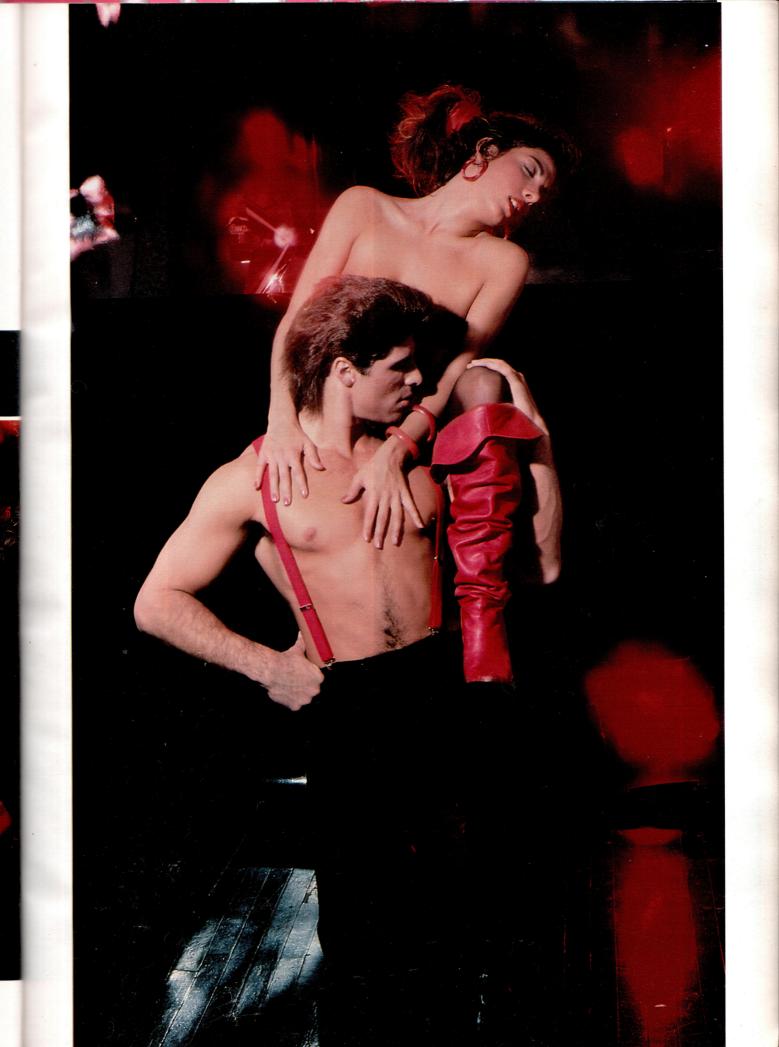
According to Jorge Luis Borges (*Playboy*, December 1986), the tango originated in Argentine brothels late in the Nineteenth Century. A dance of long, gliding steps and dramatic poses performed to music with an insistent beat, it showcases the female's ability to perform intricate patterns with smoothness, agility, and suggestiveness. There is no mistaking the meaning of the movements. They're definitely not doing honor to the rain gods.





A lso called the "forbidden" dance, or dirty dancing to a Latin rhythm, the lambada burst upon the scene like a Roman candle, had a few sparkling moments, and quickly fizzled. Perhaps it was the naughtiness that appealed initially, but a dance that consists primarily of hip thrusts and groin grinding probably becomes boring after the novelty wears off. It's still around if you know where to look. Dance clubs often feature lambada nights.





e're not sure this qualifies as a dance as defined by Webster's: "a rhythmic and patterned succession of movements." Careful observation indicates that the steps, if such they are, measure about two inches. Meanwhile, hands move over bodies and necks get nuzzled. Partners' fronts, chest to thighs, are tightly pressed together at all times. Sensuous and seductive, this is the dance of choice when the hour gets late and the music gets low-down.

SLOW DANCE









mirage and reality sometimes look the same in the desert



hariessa was the most prized horse in her father's stable. He loved the stallion more than he loved his daughter, Nefisha, and

he made no secret of that. He had banished all other females from the estate—servants, dogs, livestock—soon after his wife left him and their baby daughter. They had lived alone ever since. "The female of the species is more treacherous than the male," was her father's favorite saying.

New servants replaced the old. They spoke the language of her father's native land, which Nefisha had never learned. He wouldn't allow it. She was raised by a male nurse, educated privately by male tutors, and forbidden all communication with the world outside the estate.

There was no escape and, in truth, Nefisha gave it no thought, even when her father's business took him to foreign cities.

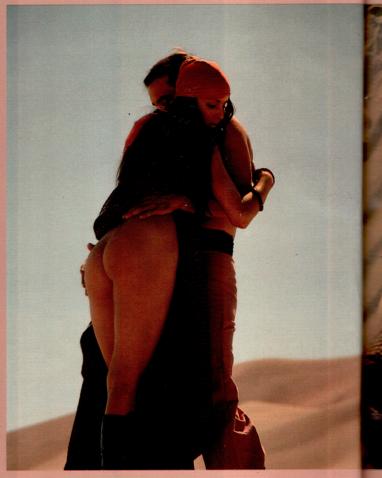
Beyond the estate walls lay the Desert of Sighing Sands, which could be seen from the highest windows in the main house and whose sorrowful winds echoed through the lonely rooms of her spacious prison. She dreamed of—no, she didn't dream; she wondered.





Sighing Sighing Sands









he made her own clothes and wove tapestries on her lost mother's loom in an empty room. A window shutter banged in

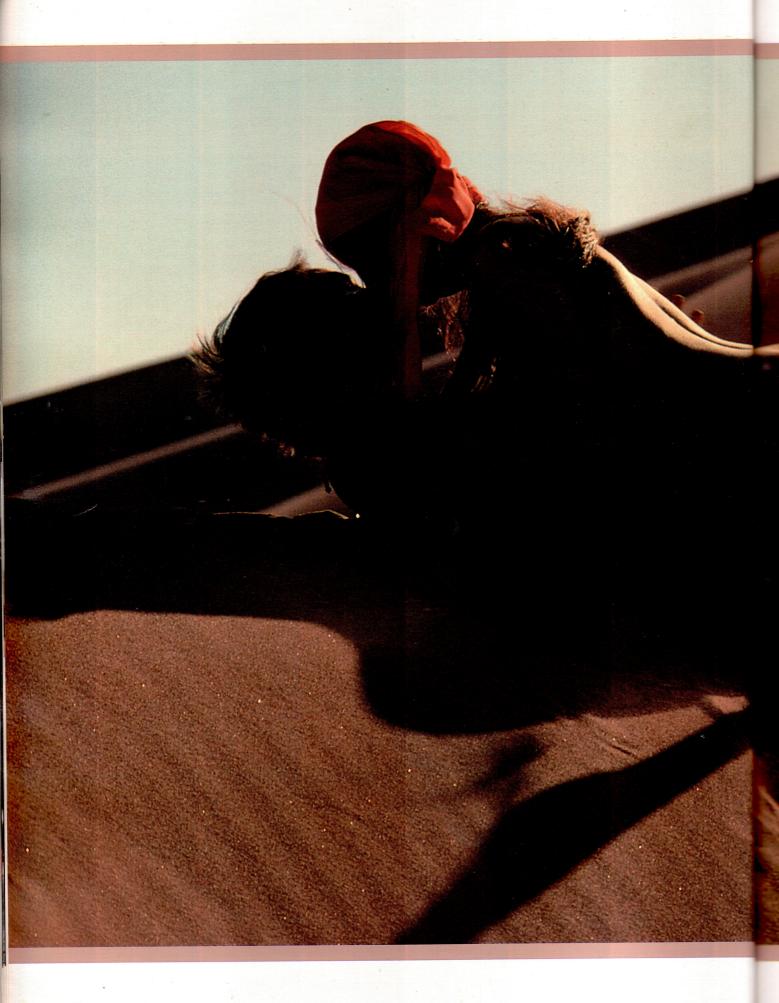
the sullen wind. A fine dust hung in the sunlight and settled on her arms. From the stables beneath the window, she heard Khariessa move in his stall. There was a man's voice, low and gentle, then the clatter of hooves in the stable yard.

Her thoughts disturbed her mind. She was in the desert. With Khariessa. There was the sand. The horse. She was not alone. A man shared the stallion's broad back. It wasn't her father, it couldn't be him. It was—ah, Rominace, Khariessa's groom, the one who never looked Nefisha in the eye.

And now they were alone in the dunes of the Sighing Sands.

Nefisha heard herself say: "What are you doing? What is this? You are hot. Where is my father? We can stay here. He will never find us."

Khariessa stood nearby, silent except for the swish of his tail and the sound of sand displaced by his restless feet.

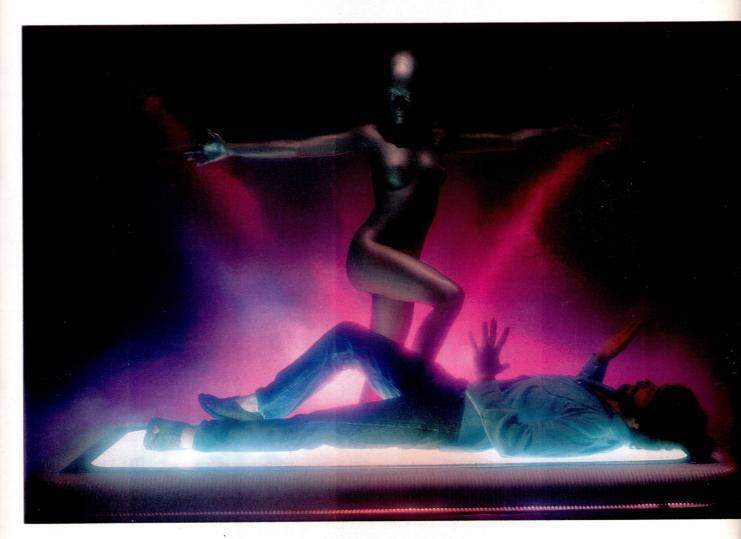




CLOSE ENCOUNTER

extraterrestrial sex may not be all bad

f we could draw any conclusions about the mentality of extraterrestrial beings from the numerous reports of human contact with them, one would 62 be that an interest in sex doesn't diminish when the size of the cranium increases. A high percentage of those people who have reported being taken aboard UFOs have told of being experimented on sexually. These experiments have ranged from the insertion of a long thin needle into a woman's ovaries to outright rape of both male and female humans by those supposedly advanced beings. In fact, some UFO researchers, both professional and amateur, have confided that they believe there is no instance in which a human has boarded an alien craft without being experimented on sexually in some way. One UFOlogist has gone as far as to say, "This is one of the most hushed-up aspects of the whole UFO issue. Most of us think that they are trying to effect some sort of cross-fertilization between our race and theirs, or perhaps grow their own humans from seed for experimentation, as one might with one-celled organisms or bacteria in the laboratory." On the other hand (and this will be loathsome to those who always impart noble scientific intentions to those telepathic aliens who go around stopping cars, burning circles of grass and kidnapping people), they may just be horny.



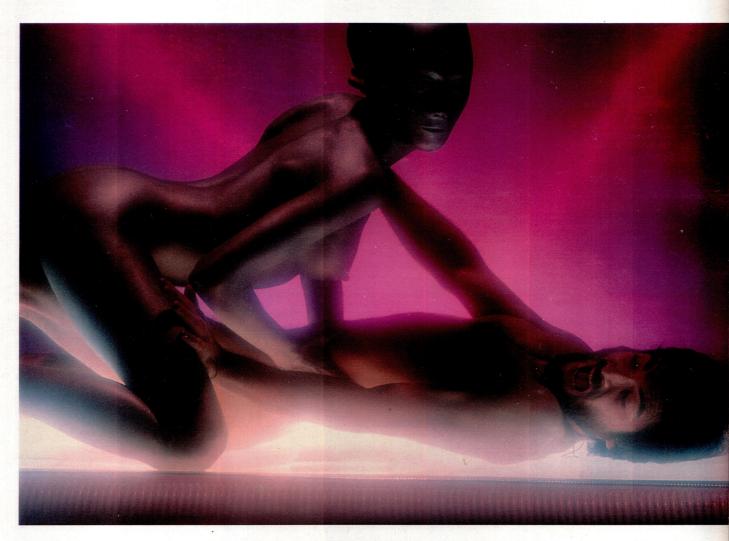
A composite of reports on file with the U.S. Air Force tells of a young man's seduction by a female extraterrestrial. He is driving across an Arizona mesa one night when a saucer lands and two aliens take him aboard. They make him lie on what looks like a glowing air mattress, then bring in a female humanoid and leave her with him.

The female has the same basic equipment as a human







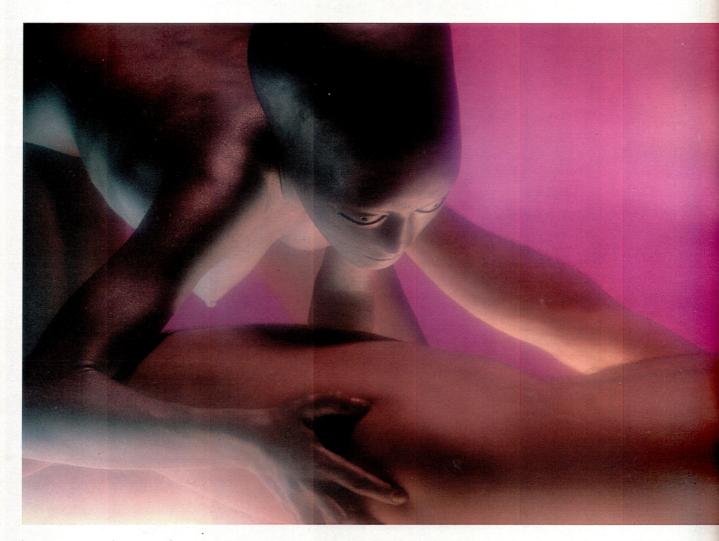


woman, but some characteristics that differ. Her face seems unfinished, with a vaguely defined nose, boneless cheeks and a slit for a mouth. Her skin is smooth, with no trace of hair. Somehow (probably through telepathic hypnosis), she overpowers and undresses him.

The alien woman tries, with no success, to arouse him sufficiently for intercourse. The unfamiliar surroundings and







her unattractiveness have made it impossible for him to think of anything but escaping. And while her sexual technique is superb, he is frightened by her cold, clinical approach.

The female alien squeezes jelly from a long tube onto his chest. Then she passes her hand over his eyes and seems to change into a beautiful woman.

He finally becomes aroused











and enters her. Eventually, he begins enjoying himself, as the moans escaping the lips of the beauty beneath him sound so convincingly human. At the moment of climax, he opens his eyes and discovers to his horror that the body with which he is coupled has become invisible. He blacks out. He awakens later in his car, fully clothed. Only the warm jelly on his chest remains as testimony of the night's events.



TWO WEEKS IN VENICE

adventures in the world's most romantic city

From the first time I'd seen photographs of Venice, I'd been obsessed with the city that seemed to be on the verge of sinking into the sea. In my mind, it became a modern Atlantis and I had to see it before it was gone.

When my friend Angeline and I decided to spend our vacation together, there was no hesitation about our destination. Angeline had a distant relative in Venice who would be glad to show us around: cousin Fabrizzio.

My heart skipped a beat when I met Fabrizzio, a gorgeous blond-haired, blue-eyed hunk. Besides being handsome, intelligent and witty, he also appeared more than willing to accommodate our wish "to live the total Venetian experience."

Fabrizzio suggested we begin our stay with a light lunch followed by a sight-seeing walk. After a meal of paper-thin Venetian pizza—and perhaps a bit too much Orvieto wine—we set out for our first look at the city that has in-









visited magnificent churches and museums. We windowshopped until we dropped. We walked along narrow streets and canals and crossed tiny bridges.

It was becoming apparent that my personal interest in cousin Fabrizzio was reciprocated. As he pointed out various sights and amused us with legendary tales of early Venetian lovers, I couldn't help but think that our guide could be one of those lusty lovers. He couldn't help but notice my obvious fascination with these stories of secret liaisons and erotic intrigues. As he spoke, he measured my reaction to especially intimate details by checking my eyes with his, perhaps testing my open-mindedness to such bold behavior.

Angeline and I had planned our trip to coincide with the an-





nual Carnival of Venice. The festival was taking place throughout the city. Fabrizzio suggested that we take part in the festivities like true Venetians.

A gondola ride on the Grand Canal in full-dress costume was an adventure our guide had planned for us. The waterway was clogged with celebrants dressed in fabulous costumes. It was a most fitting prelude to an evening of uninhibited revelry and romance, the finale of which could be imagined only in my wildest fantasies.

Fabrizzio had a surprise for us: an invitation to a masked ball where the mystery, intrigue and ribaldry of early Venice were literally reborn. We became intoxicated with the spirit of the evening.

By midnight, Angeline was becoming intoxicated with more than the spirit of the evening, so we returned to our hotel and tucked her in. Then Fabrizzio and I stole off to explore the palatial hotel and satisfy our desire to be alone with each other.

We wandered into a dark, unused corridor and tried one of the doors. To our surprise, it was open. We gazed in awe at the decadent opulence of the decor that met our eyes.

Several centuries old, our hotel had been one of the foremost meeting places for Italian merchants, political figures and nobility. From the size and regal appointments of the suite we found ourselves in, it seemed we had stumbled into chambers reserved for guests of noble rank. A ducal suite, with all the trimmings, was the site of the first intimate liaison with my Venetian lover, the dashing Count Fabrizzio!

As this remarkable setting, which exceeded even my most unbridled fantasies, took its magical hold on our imaginations, we decided to play our roles to the limit. Our loveplay







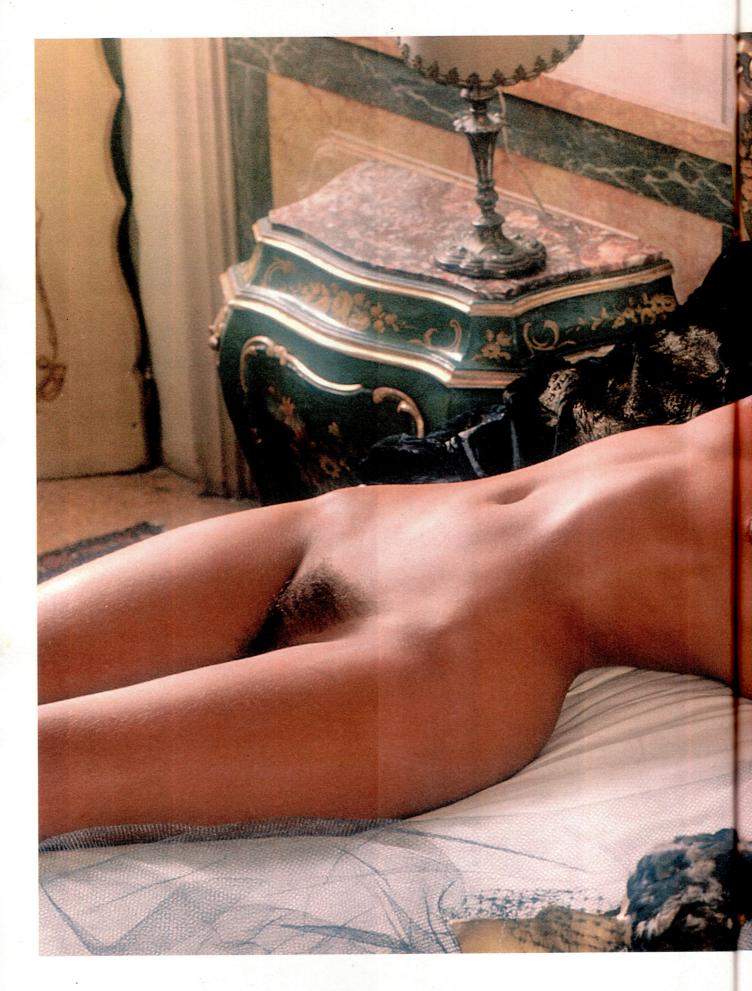
simulated the most lustful of evenings that a Venetian count and his willing maiden could contrive. And we continued to play our individual roles ardently and most arduously throughout the night.

As the faintest glint of early morning light crept into the room, my weary count and I reluctantly brought down the curtain on our delightful fantasy play. Kissing each other good night (as well as good morning), we returned to our Twentieth Century lives.

With a few more days left to my Venetian holiday, however, I knew that we would have sufficient opportunity to relive the early glories of Venice several times before it was time to leave.









FUMETTI Horacio Altuna











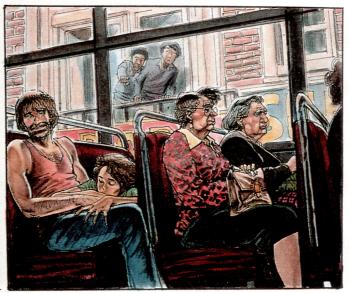






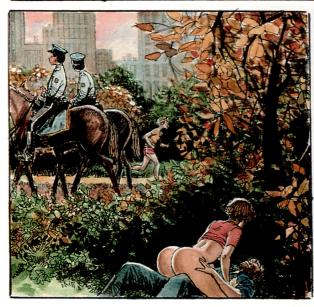
















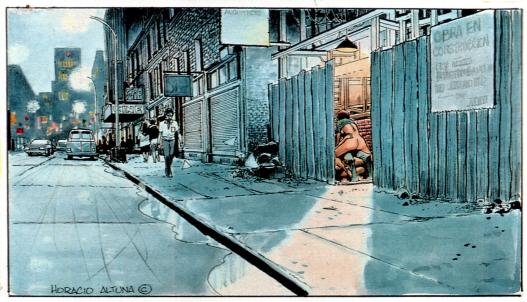












TO BED A THIEF

detective Ingrid gets her man-and more



Ingrid is a daring detective getting ready to stalk a famous jewel thief. Studying the dossier she has compiled, she hums the refrain from Tina Turner's What's Love Got to Do with It. She takes extra care to prepare for what she is sure will be a face-to-face confrontation with the suspect.

You can't catch your prey without bait, right? That's why Ingrid has spared no expense—new clothes, expensive diamonds, strategically placed gun—in her quest to snare Nick the Thief.

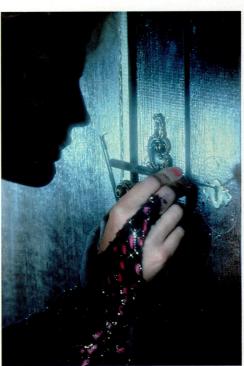
Ingrid takes a cab to the seedy Gardenia Club, Nick's favorite hangout. When she spots him at a ringside table, she tries to win his attention with a suggestive dance. What she doesn't realize is that she's already gotten his attention. Tipped off by accomplices with access to police files, Nick has been following her since she first put together her thief-catching wardrobe. He has plans of his own.

Here's where the story gets complicated, if not downright implausible. While Ingrid temporarily loses herself in a sensuous reverie on the dance floor, Nick sneaks up behind her and, true to his calling, snatches her jewels, which is an embarrassing development for any detective. She gives chase outside the club, but to no avail. Not









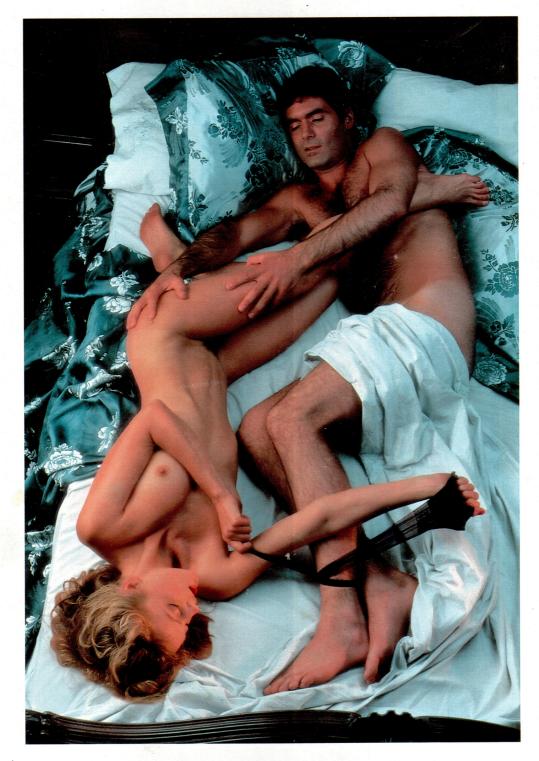


even yelling "Stop, thief!" at the top of her lungs seems to help.

But Ingrid still has a few tricks secreted in her garter belt, and she makes haste for Nick's hotel room, where she resourcefully picks the lock. When Nick comes back, Ingrid is ready. She whips out her gun, which, fortunately for Nick, fires only blanks.

Lowering his guard while lowering Ingrid's slip, Nick convinces Ingrid to lower her gun. Ingrid shows that she's a very special hostess, displaying tricks she learned before graduating at the top of her class at the police academy, including how to apply restraints and some of the subtler techniques of mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. True, these aren't the methods favored by Cagney and Lacey, but in the world of professional law enforcement, a good cop knows when to improvise. Even a jaded jewel thief like Nick is moved, and as for our detective, she, too, is caught up in the passion of





the moment. As we shall soon see, however, the result of intense fun and games can muddy a person's sense of his or her professional responsibilities.

This is obviously the problem with sex on the job. Ingrid looks happy, right? That's because she's gotten her jewels back and her rocks off. Remember, as the song says, girls just want to have fun.

But what about her professional deportment? Why isn't Nick in handcuffs and on his way to the station to be fingerprinted, booked and sent up the proverbial river? Before you jump to any sexist conclusions that Nick has won a major victory, ask yourself why he's leaving with no more jewelry than his own cuff links. What's the point of being a jewel thief if you don't get the jewels? The answer is clear. When it comes right down to it, boys just want to have fun, too.





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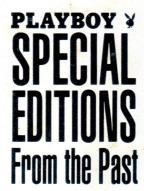


















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